Implementation of Uruguay Round Agreement

2167. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the concerns relating to the implementation of "Uruguay Round Agreement" and the imbalances and asymmetries in these agreements have been enumerated to the General Council;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken up the matter with consultative groups; and

(d) if so, with what results?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE): (a) and (b) At the recently concluded Geneva Ministerial Conference (18—20 May'98) of WTO Trade Ministers, Commerce Minister in his statement, drew the attention of WTO Members to the lack of symmetry of concessions as regards developed and developing countries in the WTO agreements as also in their manner of implementation, which has made trade liberalisation commercially less meaningful for the developing world. India's main emphasis was on the difficulties in the implementation of the WTO agreement due to these factors.

(c) These matters featured prominently in the multilateral consultations between Trade Ministers, as also during the sessions held with like-minded trading partners such as the SAARC group. They were also taken up in bilateral discussions with our major trading partners.

(d) The Conference, through the final Ministerial Declaration has endorsed India's view that existing Agreements arising out of the Uruguay Round should be effectively implemented so as to ensure that the benefits of the multilateral trading system flow to all countries, especially developing countries like India. The Conference has also agreed on the need, stressed by India and other developing countries, for effective implementation of the provisions of the Uruguay Round Agreement relating to special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries.

Direct Access to Foreign Tobacco Buyer

2168. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a farmer's delegation from Andhra Pradesh has urged for direct access to foreign tobacco buyers; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto keeping in view the plight of the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE); (a) Yes, Sir. Some representatives of growers have suggested permitting international merchants to participate in the auctions conducted by the Tobacco Board to create competition and to augment the exports.

(b) Under the new Industrial Policy, trading companies involved in exports are permitted foreign equity subject to dividend balancing. So far, no new international tobacco trading company has approached the Tobacco Board to permit participation in purchases at the Tobacco Board's auction platforms.

Export of Spices

2169. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether exports in spices industry registered an increase by 10% in value terms in 1997-98;

(b) whether Government propose to give a major boost to exporters of spcies by granting more incentives;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the action taken on the demand of exporters to remove cess devised by the Spices Board?